

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 were pending in the present application. Claims 1-14 were withdrawn from consideration due to restriction with no generic claims identified and are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer herein. Claims 15, 16, and 20 are also canceled and new claims 21 – 26 added herein. Thus claims 17-26 are now pending. The applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the present application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

The applicants note with appreciation the acknowledgement of the claim for priority under section 119 and the notice that all certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

The applicants acknowledge and appreciate receiving a copy of the form PTO-1449 submitted with the Information Disclosure Statement filed on July 31, 2003 on which the Examiner has initialed all listed items.

Claim 15 stands rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being allegedly anticipated by Sunaga et al., 6,617,719 (hereinafter “Sunaga”). Claim 15 is canceled herein rendering the rejection moot.

Claim 16 stands rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being allegedly obvious in view of Sunaga. Claim 16 is canceled herein rendering the rejection moot.

Claim 20 stands rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being allegedly obvious over Sunaga in view of Tominaga et al., 6,577,030. Claim 20 is canceled herein rendering the rejection moot.

The indication of allowability with regard to claims 17-19 is noted with appreciation. Accordingly claims 17, 18 have been rewritten in independent form to include the features of claim 15. Applicants further note that claim 19 is also rewritten herein to include the features of

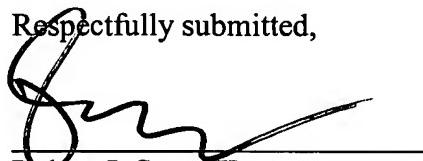
claim 15 only and believe that the combination of claim 15 and claim 19 is distinguishable over the art of record and the prior art.

New claims 21-26 are submitted herein and generally correspond as follows. Claims 21 and 22 correspond generally to canceled claims 16 and 20 rewritten to depend from claim 17, claims 23 and 24 correspond generally to canceled claims 16 and 20 rewritten to depend from claim 18, and claims 25 and 26 correspond generally to canceled claims 16 and 20 rewritten to depend from claim 19. Favorable consideration is requested.

In view of the foregoing, the applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. A timely notice to that effect is respectfully requested. If questions relating to patentability remain, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone.

Please charge any unforeseen fees that may be due to Deposit Account No. 50-1147.

Respectfully submitted,



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